

Testimony
Deputy Sheriff Esequiel Legarreta
Hudspeth County Sheriff's Department

Before
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives

“Armed and Dangerous: Confronting the
Problem of Border Incursions”
February 7, 2006

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Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

On Monday, January 23, 2006, Sheriff's Deputies from Hudspeth County were patrolling along the interstate highways when information was received that a large shipment of marijuana was supposed to be coming up from Farm Market Road 192 and up toward the Tiger Truckstop and then heading west on Interstate 10.

Further information received was that the shipment was going to be transported by (3) three new model sport utility vehicles. One vehicle was supposed to be a Black Cadillac Escalade. Vehicle number two was a Blue Ford Expedition, and the third vehicle was a Grey Toyota Four Runner.

At approximately 2:00 p.m. information received was that the vehicles had entered and were traveling toward Interstate 10. Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Troopers were advised to start heading west on Interstate 10. At approximately 2:11 p.m. all three vehicles were spotted crossing the overpass at milepost 87 heading westbound. At this time all information then aired over the radio. At milepost 84 Texas DPS Troopers noticed all three vehicle had crossed the median on Interstate 10 and were heading east on Interstate 10. The DPS Troopers attempted to make contact with these vehicles; however, the vehicles refused to stop. These vehicles attempted to elude DPS Troopers by accelerating to speeds in excess of 100-miles per hour. DPS Troopers called out a pursuit over the radio. DPS Trooper number one was behind a Black Cadillac Escalade and DPS Trooper number two was behind a Blue Ford Expedition. The Grey Toyota Four Runner was between DPS Trooper one and the Blue Ford Expedition.

The Black Cadillac Escalade blew out its front passenger tire and came to rest about seven miles south of milepost 87. DPS Trooper number one cleared the vehicle and stayed with the vehicle. The driver of that vehicle fled south toward Mexico. DPS Trooper number two and a Hudspeth County Deputy Sheriff continued to pursue the Blue Ford Expedition at speeds in excess of 100-miles per hour.

Approximately eleven miles southeast of milepost 87, the Blue Ford Expedition turned off Farm Market Road 192 and onto a dirt road heading south toward the American-Mexican border. DPS Trooper number two followed, but went off the road. The Deputy Sheriff then continued with the pursuit following behind the Blue Ford Expedition. Approximately one and a half miles south of Farm Market Road 192, the Blue Ford Expedition continued onto the Rio

Grande levee (southbound). The Grey Toyota Four Runner was already in the Rio Grande River and continuing south into Mexico.

As the Deputy Sheriffs came up on the curve they encountered the military-style hummvee that was parked on the American side of the Rio Grande levee road. As the Blue Ford Expedition went by the hummvee, it turned around and went back toward the river. A subject on the hummvee was observed wearing an olive drab green military fatigues with an olive green military cap. This subject was observed holding what appeared to be a heavy caliber weapon with what looked to be tripods mounted on it. The driver was also dressed in the same uniform, but this subject had a smaller caliber automatic weapon. The hummvee followed the vehicles in angle toward the Rio Grande River and actually got into the river crossing back into Mexico, awaiting for the two vehicles to make it back across into Mexico. The Grey Toyota Four Runner had gone first and waited in the river for the Blue Ford Expedition. The Blue Ford Expedition attempted to cross the riverbank on the Mexican side, but got stuck.

At this time another hummvee arrived and uniformed men were observed getting out and taking position east and west along the Mexico side river banks, hiding behind heavy thick brush. After the uniformed men arrived approximately 10-15 men dressed in civilian clothes arrived. Some of the civilians were armed with unknown automatic long rifles. At this time the Grey Toyota Four Runner attempted to push the Blue Ford Expedition up the bank, but could not. The hummvee then attempted to pull the Blue Ford Expedition with a chain or strap while the Grey Toyota Four Runner pushed, but this attempt failed as well. Then, a couple of men knocked over a fence on the Mexican side of the riverbank and the Grey Toyota Four Runner drove across. The hummvee then drove back into Rio Grande River and attempted to push the Blue Ford Expedition up and over the riverbank. This attempt also failed. At this time civilian men started to offload the contraband from the Blue Ford Expedition. Once the cargo was offloaded, an unknown subject intentionally set the Blue Ford Expedition on fire. The contraband was then loaded on another pick up truck on the Mexican side and then the vehicle drove off. Then, the civilians' subjects then walked away from the area along with hummvee's.

It is unknown what happened to the military uniformed individuals due to the fact that once they took cover behind the heavy thick brush they were not seen again.

Sincerely,

Esequiel Legarreta
Deputy Sheriff
Hudspeth County, TX